

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 4 and amend claims 1, 3, 15, 22, 24 and 34. A complete listing of the claims with proper claims identifiers follows.

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing a coated comestible comprising:
 - a) placing a batch of comestible cores in a coating drum having an internal drum length of at least 4 feet;
 - b) applying one or more coating syrups in multiple aliquots, with drying between applications, to build up a coating on the cores; and
 - c) adding a quantity of particulates to the cores in the coating drum after the final aliquot of coating syrup has been introduced into the drum but before the last applied final aliquot of coating syrup has dried, such that the particulates are uniformly applied across the length of the bed and stick to the coating on the cores.
2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the particulates comprise a material selected from the group consisting of colored speckle particulates, solid high-intensity sweeteners, solid physiological cooling agents, solid flavors, granular food acids, and powdered medicaments.
3. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the particulates comprise powdered caffeine-colored particulates.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the particulates are applied to the cores over a period of time that lasts between about 30 seconds and about 5 minutes.
6. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the batch of cores weighs at least 500 kg.
7. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the batch of cores weighs at least 1000 kg.

8. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the particulates are applied through multiple particulate distributors within the drum.

9. (Original) The process of claim 8 wherein the ratio of particulate distributors to drum length is at least 1 distributor for every two feet of drum length.

10. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the quantity of particulates is divided into multiple portions prior to its addition to the drum.

11. (Original) The process of claim 10 wherein the quantity of particulates is divided into portions using a vibratory pan.

12. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the internal drum length is at least 8 feet.

13. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the comestible cores comprise a confectionery.

14. (Original) The process of claim 13 wherein the confectionery is selected from the group consisting of pressed tablets and chewing gum.

15. (Currently amended) A process for producing a batch of coated comestible cores having speckles uniformly distributed on the coating of each of the cores in the batch, comprising the steps of:

a) adding a batch of comestible cores containing at least 200 kg of cores to a coating apparatus;

b) applying aliquots of coating syrup to the cores in the apparatus to build up a coating on the cores; and

c) ~~while the cores are still wet from the application of coating syrup,~~ applying about 0.2 to about 2 grams of speckle particulates per 1000 grams of coated cores in the batch after the final aliquot of coating syrup has been introduced into the coating apparatus but while the cores are still wet from the application of coating syrup.

16. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the speckle particulates are applied at a level of between about 0.6 and about 1 gram per 1000 grams of coated cores.

17. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the application of the speckle particulates is carried out in less than 1 second per 1000 grams of coated cores.

18. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the application of the speckle particulates is carried out in less than 0.5 seconds per 1000 grams of coated cores.

19. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the comestible cores comprise chewing gum pellets.

20. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the coating comprises a hard crunchy coating.

21. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein the coating comprises a soft panned coating.

22. (Currently amended) A process for uniformly applying particulates to coated comestible cores comprising the steps of:

- a) placing a batch of comestible cores in a coating apparatus;
- b) applying aliquots of coating syrup to build up a coating on the cores; and
- c) applying particulates to the cores after the final aliquot of coating syrup has been introduced into the coating apparatus but while they are still wet with coating syrup, the particulates being applied from multiple, spaced apart, particulate distributors within the coating apparatus, the application of the particulates occurring simultaneously from each of the multiple particulate distributors.

23. (Original) The process of claim 22 wherein the multiple particulate distributors comprise multiple hoses each having a discharge outlet within the coating apparatus.

24. (Currently amended) The process of claim 23 wherein each discharge outlet includes a conical diverter, and the particulates are diverted thereby as they are discharged from the hose.

25. (Original) The process of claim 22 wherein the multiple particulate distributors comprises at least four distributors.

26. (Original) The process of claim 22 wherein a wax coating is applied to the coated cores over the particulates.

27. (Original) A process for applying particulates to a plurality of comestible cores during the production of coated comestible cores comprising the steps of:

- a) placing a batch of comestible cores in a coating apparatus;
- b) applying aliquots of coating syrup while the cores are tumbled in the coating apparatus to build up a coating on the cores;
- c) dividing a predetermined total amount of particulates to be applied to the coated cores into at least three portions of approximately equal size; and
- d) applying each of the portions of particulates to the coated cores simultaneously from a different particulate distributor in the coating apparatus while the coated cores are being tumbled.

28. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein the total amount of particulates is divided by dividers defining separate lanes in a sloped, vibratory pan.

29. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein each of the particulate portions is pneumatically conveyed to the coating apparatus by a separate hose.

30. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein the total amount of particulates is still being divided into the portions when the first part of each portion starts to be applied to the cores in the coating apparatus.

31. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein at least 90% of the total particulates are applied to the coated cores at a uniform rate of amount per unit of time.

32. (Original) The process of claim 31 wherein said at least 90% of the particulates are applied to the coated cores at a uniform rate of between about 0.002 grams/second and about 0.006 grams/second per 1000 grams of coated cores.

33. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein the speed at which the coated cores are tumbled during the application of particulate is slower than the speed at which the cores are tumbled during application of the aliquots of coating syrup.

34. (Currently amended) A process for producing comestible cores with a uniformly colored background coating and speckle particulates of a contrasting color comprising the steps of:

- a) adding a batch of comestible cores to a coating apparatus;
- b) applying aliquots of coating syrup, at least some of which have a light colored pigment therein, to the cores in successive operations to build up a light colored coating on the cores;
- c) providing a quantity of speckle particulates that have a contrasting color to the light colored pigment and a generally uniform size distribution;
- d) applying the quantity of speckle particulates to the cores in the coating apparatus after the final aliquot of coating syrup has been introduced into the coating apparatus but while the coating syrup is still wet so that the speckle particulates stick to the light colored coating; and
- e) drying the wet coating syrup with the speckle particulates thereon rapidly after the speckle particulates are applied to avoid transfer of color from the speckle particulates on one coated core to the background coating on other cores in the batch.

35. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the speckle particulates have a size distribution such that less than 30% of the speckle particulates will pass through a #60 U.S. standard sieve, and at least 90% of the speckle particulates will pass through a #20 U.S. standard sieve.

36. (Original) The process of claim 35 wherein the speckle particulates have a size distribution such that at least 45% of the speckle particulates will be retained on a #40 U.S. standard sieve.

37. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the speckle particulates have a size such that the longest dimension of a majority of the speckle particulates is between about 0.2 mm and about 0.6 mm.

38. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the coating syrup includes titanium dioxide as a pigment to produce a white background coating on the cores.

39. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the speckle particulates comprise particles having at least one contrasting color selected from the group consisting of blue, green, red and purple.

40. (Original) The process of claim 39 wherein more than one color of speckle particulates is applied.

41. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the coating syrup is aqueous based.

42. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the speckle particulates comprise color and a material selected from the group consisting of gum arabic and sodium alginate.

43. (Original) The process of claim 34 wherein the speckle particulates comprise about 0.2% to about 2% color.

44. (Withdrawn) A batch of at least 1000 kg of coated comestible cores in a coating apparatus, each of the coated cores having a hard crunchy coating of a first color and speckles of a second color randomly distributed over the cores, the cores in the batch having a generally uniform number of speckles from one coated core to the next.

45. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the uniformity of distribution is such that when a representative sample of at least 100 coated cores is divided into at least five classifications based on the number of speckles on the cores, at least 60% of the samples are within two adjacent classifications.

46. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the coating comprises xylitol.

47. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the coating comprises maltitol.

48. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the first color comprises white.

49. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the coated comestible is a confectionery with a mint flavor.

50. (Withdrawn) The batch of coated cores of claim 44 wherein the coating comprises a mint flavor.

51. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing coated comestible cores with particulates in the coating comprising:

a) a rotating drum having an internal drum length of at least 4 feet for holding and tumbling comestible cores during a coating operation;

b) at least one syrup applicator for applying a coating syrup to the cores within the rotating drum; and

c) a plurality of spaced apart, particulate distributors, each connected to a source of particulates, and placed within the drum so as to uniformly distribute particulates to the cores while the drum is rotating.

52. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein each of the particulate distributors is connected to a separate particulate supply source.

53. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the particulates are delivered pneumatically to the particulate distributors, each distributor being connected to a separate pneumatic hose.

54. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 53 wherein the separate particulate supply sources comprise a vibratory pan feeding particulates into venturi eductors, with each eductor being connected to a different pneumatic hose.

55. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the separate particulate supply sources comprise a vibratory pan with dividers that divide a quantity of particulates to be applied to one batch of cores within the drum into a number of portions equal to the number of particulate distributors.

56. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein the drum is about 8 to about 12 feet in length and the plurality of particulate distributors comprise at least 5 distributors.

57. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein each particulate distributor is located between about 18 inches and about 32 inches from another particulate distributor.

58. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein the drum is at least 2 feet in internal diameter.

59. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing coated comestible cores with particulates in the coating comprising:

- a) a rotating drum for holding and tumbling comestible cores during a coating operation;
- b) at least one syrup applicator for applying coating syrup to the cores within the rotating drum;
- c) a plurality of spaced apart, particulate distributors placed within the drum; and

d) a source of particulates that is controlled so as to supply particulates simultaneously to each of the particulate distributors so as to uniformly distribute particulates to the cores while the drum is rotating.

60. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 59 wherein the rotating drum is designed for minimal longitudinal movement of the cores while the cores are being coated with particulates.

61. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing coated comestible cores with particulates in the coating comprising:

- a) a coating apparatus for holding and tumbling comestible cores during a coating operation;
- b) at least one syrup applicator for applying a coating syrup to the cores within the coating apparatus; and
- c) a plurality of spaced apart, particulate distributors placed within the coating apparatus, each of the particulate distributors being connected to a supply of particulates.

62. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein each of the particulate distributors is connected to a different pneumatic hose which conveys the particulates in a suspended form.

63. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for automatically coating comestible cores with a coating having particulates therein, the apparatus comprising:

- a) a coating apparatus for holding and tumbling comestible cores during a coating operation;
- b) at least one syrup applicator for applying coating syrup to the cores within the coating apparatus;
- c) a controller connected to the at least one syrup applicator that controls the application of syrup in separate aliquots;
- d) at least one particulate distributor placed within the coating apparatus connected to a supply of particulates; and

e) a controller connected to the particulate supply that automatically activates the supply of particulates to the at least one particulate distributor at a predetermined time after a predetermined aliquot of syrup has been applied.

64. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the at least one particulate distributor comprises at least four spaced apart distributors.

65. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the at least one particulate distributor distributes speckle particulates after the last application of coating syrup.

66. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for applying particulates to a batch of coated comestible cores comprising:

- a) a rotating body for holding and tumbling the comestible cores;
- b) at least one syrup applicator for applying coating syrup to the tumbling cores; and
- c) a particulate applicator comprising
 - i) at least one particulate distributor positioned to distribute particulates on the tumbling cores;
 - ii) a number of venturi eductors equal to the number of particulate distributors;
 - iii) a pneumatic hose connected between each venturi eductor and each particulate distributor; and
 - vi) a vibratory pan for holding a quantity of particulates and causing the particulates to vibrate and flow at a uniform rate into each venturi eductor.

67. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for dividing a quantity of particulates into generally equal portions for uniform application to a batch of coated comestible cores comprising:

- a) a sloped vibratory pan; and

b) one or more dividers in the pan, each running generally parallel with the direction of slope, defining a plurality of lanes between the one or more dividers and the sides of the pan.

68. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 67 further comprising an adjustable height gate associated with each lane to control the rate at which particulates enter the lane as the pan is vibrating.

69. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 68 wherein each gate height may be adjusted independently.

70. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 67 further comprising a venturi eductor associated with each lane to entrain particulates from that lane into a flowing air stream.

71. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 68 further comprising a pneumatic hose connected to each venturi eductor.

72. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 71 further comprising an air supply tank to which each of the pneumatic hoses is connected to supply uniform air pressure to each venturi eductor.

73. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 72 wherein the air in the air supply tank is supplied at a pressure of about 1.5 psi.

101-174. (Canceled)